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## THESIS

U.S. SECURITY POLICY IN ASIA  
AFTER KOREAN UNIFICATION

by

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December, 1997

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# REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

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1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave blank)		2. REPORT DATE December 1997	3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED Master's Thesis	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE U.S. SECURITY POLICY IN ASIA AFTER KOREAN UNIFICATION			5. FUNDING NUMBERS	
6. AUTHOR(S) Ahern, Bryan M.				
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Naval Postgraduate School Monterey, CA 93943-5000			8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)			10. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER	
11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES The views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not reflect the official policy or position of the Department of Defense or the U.S. Government.				
12a. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited.			12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE	
13. ABSTRACT (maximum 200 words) <p>The U.S. has pursued three policy objectives in Asia since World War II. They are 1) freedom of the seas; 2) access to the markets of the region; and 3) preventing the domination of the region by any single power. To achieve these goals, the U.S. has committed to maintain 100,000 forward deployed-troops in Asia. Currently, 37,000 are stationed in South Korea. North Korea is in crisis. Seven years of negative GDP growth, severe food shortages, several high level defections and North Korea's political isolation all indicate that North Korea is on the verge of collapse. This thesis argues that the collapse of North Korea is imminent. Once Korea is unified under South Korea, the U. S. will not need 37,000 troops in Korea. When the U.S. withdraws its troops from Korea, a potential arms race could ensue. To prevent this, the U.S. should increase its naval presence after the withdrawal of American ground forces. The U.S. should consider the possibility of home porting a nuclear aircraft carrier in Korea. This proposed policy would solve the problem created by Japan's refusal to host U.S. nuclear powered aircraft carriers at a time when the U.S. is retiring its conventional carriers.</p>				
14. SUBJECT TERMS North Korea; Korea; Korean Unification; U.S. Security Policy; U.S.-Japan Security Agreement; U.S.-ROK Mutual Defense Treaty			15. NUMBER OF PAGES 112	
			16. PRICE CODE	
17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT Unclassified	18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE Unclassified	19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT Unclassified		20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT UL

NSN 7540-01-280-5500

Standard Form 298 (Rev. 2-89)  
Prescribed by ANSI Std. Z39-18



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**U.S SECURITY POLICY IN ASIA  
AFTER KOREAN UNIFICATION**

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**Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the degree of**

**MASTER OF ARTS IN NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS**

**from the**

**NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL**

**December 1997**



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~~P. 2~~

**ABSTRACT**

The U.S. has pursued three policy objectives in Asia since World War II. They are 1) freedom of the seas; 2) access to the markets of the region; and 3) preventing the domination of the region by any single power. To achieve these goals, the U.S. has committed to maintain 100,000 forward deployed-troops in Asia. Currently, 37,000 are stationed in South Korea. North Korea is in crisis. Seven years of negative GDP growth, severe food shortages, several high level defections and North Korea's political isolation all indicate that North Korea is on the verge of collapse. This thesis argues that the collapse of North Korea is imminent. Once Korea is unified under South Korea, the U. S. will not need 37,000 troops in Korea. When the U.S. withdraws its troops from Korea, a potential arms race could ensue. To prevent this, the U.S. should increase its naval presence after the withdrawal of American ground forces. The U.S. should consider the possibility of home porting a nuclear aircraft carrier in Korea. This proposed policy would solve the problem created by Japan's refusal to host U.S. nuclear powered aircraft carriers at a time when the U.S. is retiring its conventional carriers.







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## I. INTRODUCTION

Since the end of World War II, the United States has pursued three broad policy objectives in Asia. They are 1) freedom of the seas; 2) unimpeded access to the markets of the region; and 3) preventing the domination of the region by a single power or group of powers.<sup>1</sup> In order to achieve these policy objectives, the United States entered into a series of bilateral security agreements with several countries in Asia. In Northeast Asia, the United States has security agreements with two key allies. The agreements are with Japan and the Republic of Korea (South Korea). The United States commitment to maintain forward-deployed forces in both Japan and South Korea has been a central element of United States security policy. These forward-deployed forces have been instrumental in maintaining stability in the region, especially on the Korean Peninsula. In 1997, Secretary of Defense William Cohen reaffirmed this commitment in his Quadrennial Defense Review. He said "the United States would indefinitely maintain the current 100,000 forward-deployed troop level

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<sup>1</sup> Kim R. Holmes and Thomas G. Moore, Restoring American Leadership, (Washington: Heritage Foundation, 1996) 52.

in Asia."<sup>2</sup> Of the 100,000 forward-deployed troops, 37,000 are stationed in South Korea.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea) is currently experiencing severe food shortages. Many international aid agencies predict mass starvation in the near future unless a monumental relief effort is launched. Additionally, several high level North Korean officials have recently defected. Finally, North Korea has experienced seven straight years of negative economic growth. The current conditions in North Korea have led many scholars and regional security experts to predict that North Korea is on the verge of both economic and political collapse. The prospect of a unified Korean Peninsula is more likely now than it has been at any time since 1953.<sup>3</sup>

The purpose of this thesis is to evaluate what impact Korean unification will have on long standing United States security policy in Asia. I will propose three scenarios that could lead to the unification of Korea. I will assign a rank order to the scenarios and determine which is most likely to occur. Finally, I will make recommendations as

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<sup>2</sup> William S. Cohen, Report of the Quadrennial Defense Review, (Washington: GPO, 1997) 31.

<sup>3</sup> For example see Selig B. Harrison, "Promoting a Soft Landing in Korea." *Foreign Policy* 106 (Spring 1997): 57-75 and Edward A. Olsen,

to what United States security policy in Asia should be following Korean unification.

There has been little discussion as to what United States security policy in Asia should be following Korean unification. This thesis will offer some suggestions and will hopefully spur debate on this important topic.

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"Coping with the Korean Peace Process: An American View," *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis* Vol.IX, No. 1 (Summer 1997): 159-180.





## II. UNITED STATES SECURITY POLICY IN ASIA

### A. HISTORICAL FRAMEWORK

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 brought the Cold War to an abrupt and surprising end. The communist containment policy which had been at the center of United States foreign and military policy for over forty-five years suddenly ceased to exist. In Congress, a consensus emerged that American taxpayers were due the spoils of victory. The spoils would be in the form of a peace dividend. The United States, lacking a peer military competitor, could now afford to draw down its military and divert the savings to domestic programs or tax cuts.

The Bush administration called for a re-evaluation of United States military force structure with special emphasis on realigning or recalling forward-deployed forces. As a result of the review, the administration adopted the so-called "Base Force" strategy. The principle behind the strategy was to downsize the military while maintaining a modest forward-deployed presence in both



Europe and Asia. The policy called for a force reduction of approximately 32,000 personnel in Asia between 1990-1995.<sup>4</sup>

Building on the "Base Force" strategy, Secretary of Defense Les Aspin initiated the Bottom-Up Review in 1993. The goal of the Bottom-Up Review was to reassess all of our defense concepts, plans, and programs from the ground up.<sup>5</sup> As a result of the Bottom-Up Review, the United States defense budget has been slashed from some 400 billion dollars in 1986 at the height of the Cold War, to 250 billion dollars in 1997.<sup>6</sup>

The growing isolationist sentiments in Washington and the withdrawal of United States forces began to alarm Asian leaders. They feared that the United States would completely withdraw from Asia, creating a potential power vacuum and subsequently unleashing an arms race. To allay these fears, the Bottom-Up Review reaffirmed the United States commitment to Asia. The report states that peacetime overseas presence of our forces is the single most visible demonstration of our commitment to defend United States and

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<sup>4</sup> William T. Tow, "Changing US Force Levels and Regional Security", *Contemporary Security Policy*, (August 1994): 12.

<sup>5</sup> Les Aspin, Report of the Bottom-Up Review, (Washington: GPO, 1993), iii.

<sup>6</sup> Office of the Under Secretary of Defense (Comptroller), National Defense Budget Estimates for FY 1998, (Washington: GPO, 1997), 78-79.

allied interests in Europe, Asia and elsewhere in the world.<sup>7</sup>

Additionally, the report states that the United States planned to retain close to 100,000 forward-deployed troops in Northeast Asia. President Clinton also announced that United States troops would stay in South Korea as long as the South Korean people want and need them.<sup>8</sup>

The just completed Quadrennial Defense Review reaffirms this policy and pledges that the United States will indefinitely maintain the 100,000 troop level in the Asia/Pacific region. The Quadrennial Defense Review states that:

These deployed forces underscore our commitment to remain engaged as a stabilizing influence in the region, alleviates the potential for a destabilizing arms race in the region, underwrites deterrence on the Korean Peninsula and elsewhere, and strengthens our voice in international forums dealing not only with Asian security matters but also political and economic matters.<sup>9</sup>

This chapter will answer two questions. First, what security commitments does the United States have in Asia

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<sup>7</sup> Aspin, 8.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>9</sup> Cohen, 31.

and second, what are United States vital national security interests in Asia?

## **B. UNITED STATES SECURITY COMMITMENTS IN NORTHEAST ASIA**

The United States has security agreements with two key allies in Northeast Asia. The security agreements are with Japan and South Korea.

### **1. United States-Japan Security Agreement**

The unconditional surrender of Japan at the end of World War II led to the United States occupation and control over every facet of the country. General Douglas MacArthur as the Supreme Allied Commander was in charge of occupation forces in Japan. His orders were to:

1. Ensure that Japan will not again become a menace to the United States or to the peace and security of the world.

2. To bring about the eventual establishment of a peaceful and responsible government that will respect the rights of other states and will support the ideals and principals of the United Nations Charter.<sup>10</sup>

General MacArthur embarked on a series of major reforms in order to transform Japanese society into a

peaceful democracy. These reforms affected all levels of society and included: land reforms, establishment of rights and liberties, emancipation of women, release of political prisoners, liberalization of education and development of trade unions.<sup>11</sup>

The capstone of the reforms would be a new Japanese constitution. General MacArthur ordered his staff to draw up a new constitution and on 3 May 1947, the new constitution was enacted. The constitution included Article IX commonly referred to as the anti-war clause. The Article reads:

Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat of force as a means of settling international disputes.

In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the State will not be recognized.<sup>12</sup>

Article IX effectively eliminated the military and returned power to a civilian government for the first time

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<sup>10</sup> Masanori Nakamura, "Democratization, Peace, and Economic Development in Occupied Japan", in *The Politics Of Democratization*, ed. Edward Friedman (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), 63.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 64.

<sup>12</sup> Article IX of Japanese Constitution.

in many years. The reforms and new constitution planted the seeds of democracy in Japan.

In 1950, a peace treaty between Japan and the United States was put on the agenda. John Foster Dulles was appointed to negotiate the peace treaty. He conducted bilateral negotiations in advance of the peace conference in order to work out the language of the treaty. The Peace Treaty was signed in San Francisco on September 8, 1951 between Japan and forty-eight nations. The People's Republic of China and the Soviet Union were not signatories of the treaty.<sup>13</sup>

The peace treaty would end United States military control over Japan. Control of the country would be returned to a democratically elected civilian government. However, the Peace Constitution would leave Japan defenseless. Japan and the United States therefore negotiated the separate United States-Japan security agreement, which was also signed on September 8, 1951.

The treaty required the United States to provide for the defense of Japan. In return, Japan would give the United States the right to base troops in Japan and

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<sup>13</sup> Edwin O. Reischauer, Japan The Story Of A Nation, (New York: McGraw-Hill Publishing Co., 1990), 198-201.



contribute financially to help offset the costs to the U.S. As a result of the treaty, the United States now has approximately 45,000 forward-deployed troops in Japan. The troops are based in both Okinawa and Japan. In Okinawa the United States has one Marine Expeditionary Force, and an Army Special Forces battalion. In Japan the United States has one aircraft carrier and one amphibious assault ship plus their escort ships. Additionally the Air Force has approximately one and one-half wings of combat aircraft stationed in Japan and Okinawa. In 1996, Japan paid the United States over five billion dollars for the forward-deployed forces.<sup>14</sup>

The United States-Japan security agreement has served both countries well. Japan was able to concentrate on economic development without the immense financial burden of re-arming. The United States was able to use the forward-deployed forces to support the containment policy and to support the forward-deployed forces in Korea.

#### **a. Japan's Self-Defense Force**

As Japan was adopting her new constitution, U.S.-Soviet relations began to deteriorate. In China in 1949

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<sup>14</sup> Aspin, 23-24.

Mao Zedong and the communists would defeat the United States supported Nationalists and win the civil war.<sup>15</sup> In Korea on June 25, 1950, Soviet supported North Korean communist forces would cross the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel and invade South Korea.<sup>16</sup>

The communist advances in Asia alarmed the United States. George F. Kennan from the State Department developed the United States containment policy to halt the communist advance. John Foster Dulles saw Japan as a potential military ally in the containment policy.<sup>17</sup>

Thus, a short time after insisting on Article IX to de-arm Japan, the United States would reverse course and begin to pressure Japan to re-arm. MacArthur and Japan's Prime Minister, Yoshida, resisted Washington and insisted on maintaining the integrity of the constitution, which would not permit Japan to re-arm.<sup>18</sup>

In 1953 President Eisenhower appointed John Foster Dulles as Secretary of State. Frustrated by his earlier failure to re-arm Japan, Dulles still believed that

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<sup>15</sup> John King Fairbank, China A New History, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 337.

<sup>16</sup> Woo-keun Han, The History Of Korea, (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1974), 505.

<sup>17</sup> Tetsuya Kataoka and Raymon H. Myers, Defending An Economic Superpower, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1989), 13.



Japan should contribute to the containment policy. Again, the Yoshida government resisted re-arming citing article IX of the constitution. Eventually, Yoshida was persuaded that a Self-Defense Force could be established without violating the spirit of the constitution. In 1954 Yoshida finally acquiesced and agreed to a bill, which would establish a 220,000-man Self-Defense Force. The establishment of the Self-Defense Forces meant that Japan would no longer have to solely rely on the United States for its defense.<sup>19</sup>

Military expenditures in Japan have traditionally been limited to 1 percent of GNP. As the economy has grown, outlays in military expenditures have also increased. In 1985, Japan spent just over 14 billion dollars on defense. By 1995, the amount increased to just over 47 billion dollars.<sup>20</sup>

Japan now has a very capable military force. It currently has 64 major surface combatants; 15 attack submarines; 85 long-range patrol aircraft; 92 anti-submarine helicopters; and 154 F-15 fighters.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Tetsuya Kataoka, Waiting For A Pearl Harbor, (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1980), 11-12.

<sup>19</sup> Kataoka, 15.

<sup>20</sup> World Fact Book 1995, (Washington: Central Intelligence Agency, 1995), 217.

<sup>21</sup> David Arase, "New Directions in Japanese Security Policy", *Contemporary Security Policy*, (August 1994): 44.

The traditional role of the self-defense force has been to protect Japan from foreign invasion. This role included protecting territorial seas around Japan out to a twelve-mile limit. However, in the 1980's the mission was expanded to include sea-lane defense up to 1,000 nautical miles from Japan. This expanded mission would signal the first change in Japanese defense policy since the end of World War II.<sup>22</sup>

## **2. United States-ROK Mutual Defense Treaty**

It became clear in August of 1945 that Japan would soon lose the war in the Pacific. The United States and the Soviet Union agreed to split the Japanese occupied Korean Peninsula along the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. United States forces would occupy the southern half while Soviet forces would occupy the northern half. American forces arrived in Korea on September 8, 1945.<sup>23</sup>

The United States did not recognize the government in Korea and instead established the United States Army Military Government to rule over Korea. The military

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<sup>22</sup> David Arase, "A Militarized Japan?" *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 18 (September 1995): 88.

<sup>23</sup> Mark Borthwick, Pacific Century The Emergence of Modern Pacific Asia, (Boulder: Westview, 1992), 378.

government attempted to establish some limited social and economic reforms. Unlike MacArthur's administration in postwar Japan, these reforms were not as far reaching and did not encompass every aspect of society. The military government was able to initiate limited land and labor reforms.<sup>24</sup>

One of the highest priorities for the United States in Korea was to establish a democratically elected government. United States and Soviet occupation forces could not agree on elections that would cover the entire country. Eventually, separate elections were held in the South and the North. Both of the newly elected governments claimed to be the legitimate rulers of the entire peninsula. Sensing that the situation in Korea was somewhat stable, Soviet forces withdrew in 1948 and American forces withdrew in 1949. With both North and South Korea holding unification as one of their primary policy objectives, the stage was set for a civil war.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 380.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 382-383.

#### **a. Korean War**

On 25 June 1950, in an effort to unify the peninsula, North Korean forces crossed the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel and attacked South Korea. United States forces quickly came to the aid of South Korea and conducted a major amphibious landing in Inchon. The North Korean forces were pushed out of South Korea all the way up to the Chinese border. China feared that the United States would cross the border into China, so they joined in battle alongside the North Koreans. The Chinese and North Koreans eventually pushed the combined United States and South Korean forces back to the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. The war would end in a stalemate on the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel just where it had begun.<sup>26</sup>

On 27 July 1953, after two years of negotiations, a United Nations sponsored armistice was signed ending the Korean War. On 8 August 1953, the Republic of Korea and the United States signed a mutual defense treaty. There are two key articles to the treaty.

Article II. The parties will consult together whenever, in the opinion of either of them, the political independence or security of either of the parties is threatened by external armed attack. Separately and jointly, by self-help and mutual aid, the parties will maintain and develop

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<sup>26</sup> Richard T. Detrio, Strategic Partners: South Korea and the United States, (Washington: National Defense University, 1989), 6-7.

appropriate means to deter armed attack and will take suitable measures in consultation and agreement to implement this treaty and to further its purposes.

Article IV. The Republic of Korea grants, and the United States of America accepts, the right to dispose United States land, air and sea forces in and about the territory of the Republic of Korea as determined by mutual agreement.<sup>27</sup>

Since the end of the Korean War and the signing of the mutual defense treaty, the United States has maintained forward-deployed forces in Korea. Today the United States has some 36,000 troops forward-deployed in Korea. These forces are made up of one army division and one wing of Air Force combat aircraft. Additionally we have 160 tanks and 310 armored vehicles in Korea.<sup>28</sup>

In addition to the forward-deployed forces the United States has also given substantial economic assistance to South Korea. For twenty years after the signing of the Mutual Defense Treaty, Korea received approximately 8 percent of all United States foreign aid.

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<sup>27</sup> Ernest Graves, "ROK-U.S. Security Cooperation: Current Status," in The Future of South Korean-U.S. Security Relations, eds. William J. Taylor, Jr., Young Koo Cha, John Q. Blodgett, and Michael Mazarr (Boulder: Westview, 1989), 15.

<sup>28</sup> Defense White Paper, (Seoul: The Ministry of National Defense, The Republic of Korea, 1996), 38.



Between 1954 and 1970, the United States gave Korea over 3.5 billion dollars in economic assistance.<sup>29</sup>

**b. Republic of Korea Defense Forces**

Korea has developed a very capable military force. As of 1996, Korea had over 650,000 troops. This figure does not include reserve forces. Korea currently has 2,050 tanks, 2,200 armored vehicles, 180 combatant ships, 520 tactical aircraft and 630 helicopters.<sup>30</sup>

American forward-deployed forces have become less important to the defense of Korea as the capabilities of the South Korean military have increased. In fact, American forces have taken on a somewhat symbolic role reflecting the United States commitment to Korea. They have often been called a "tripwire" or "speed bump". It is doubtful that American forward-deployed forces would play a determining role in the outcome of war should North Korea decide to attack.

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<sup>29</sup> Detrio, 15.

<sup>30</sup> Defense White Paper, 71.

### C. UNITED STATES VITAL NATIONAL SECURITY INTERESTS IN ASIA

The United States has pursued three broad policy objectives in Asia since the end of World War II. They are 1) freedom of the seas; 2) unimpeded access to the markets of the region; and 3) preventing the domination of the region by a single power or group of powers.<sup>31</sup>

While the United States has consistently pursued these three policy objectives, it has not given equal weight to each. During the Cold War the primary objective was to contain communism. The defense of South Korea was an essential element of this policy. With the end of the Cold War the emphasis has shifted.

Today the most important policy objectives are keeping open access to the markets of Asia and maintaining freedom of the seas. The non-Western countries (and Japan) of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation Group now account for over 25 percent of the global GNP. American trade with Asian countries continues to increase. By 1994, American exports to Asia would amount to \$153 billion dollars and account for over 3 million American jobs. In 1994,

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<sup>31</sup> Holmes and Moore, 52.



American exports to Asia were \$45 billion greater than American exports to the 15 nations of the European Union.<sup>32</sup>

In 1997 several economies in Asia took an unexpected downturn. It is too early to determine how deeply rooted the current economic crisis is and what effect it will have on American trade in the region. However, the economic crisis could have a profound effect on longstanding United States security policies in Asia.

For example, American taxpayers may be unwilling to bail out South Korea or Japan if their economies fail. China may fill the void and view this as an opportunity to gain influence in the region. The implications for United States security policy could be devastating. Accordingly, United States and South Korean security officials need to watch the regional economic situation closely to manage its impact on the U.S.-ROK alliance and the alliance's ability to cope with North Korea's evolving circumstances.

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<sup>32</sup> U.S. Congress, House, Committee on International Relations, Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific, Security in Northeast Asia: From Okinawa to the DMZ, hearing, 104<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., 17 April 1996 (Washington: GPO, 1996), 53.

### III. DIVISION AND UNIFICATION OF THE KOREAN PENINSULA

#### A. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND TO THE DIVISION OF THE KOREAN PENINSULA

The end of WWII in Asia brought with it the end of Japanese colonial occupation in Korea. Korea was divided in two with Soviet forces occupying the territory north of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel while American forces occupied the territory south of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. On 15 August 1948, the pro-American Republic of Korea was formed and on 9 September 1948, the pro-Soviet Democratic Peoples Republic of Korea emerged.<sup>33</sup>

On 25 June 1950, the communist forces of North Korea launched a surprise pre-dawn attack against South Korea in an effort to unify the peninsula.<sup>34</sup> On 27 June 1950, the United Nations Security Council passed enforcement resolution 83 which recommended that members of the United Nations furnish such assistance to South Korea as may be

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<sup>33</sup> Sung Chul Yang, The North and Southern Korean Political Systems: A Comparative Analysis, (Boulder: Westview, 1994) 153.

<sup>34</sup> John J. Metzler, Divided Dynamism: The Diplomacy of Separated Nations Germany, Korea, China, (New York: University Press of America, 1996) 68.

necessary to repel the armed attack and to restore international peace and security in the region.<sup>35</sup>

Led by the United States, the international community responded to the Security Council resolution. Sixteen countries sent units to Korea to push back North Korean forces. On 27 July 1953, an armistice was signed by the United Nations Command with the People's Republic of China (PRC) and North Korea.<sup>36</sup> By the end of the war, it was estimated that 1.3 million South Koreans and 1.5 to 2 million North Koreans had died.<sup>37</sup>

Ever since, Korea has been divided into two sovereign countries. The overriding policy objective of both the North and South Korean governments has been the unification of Korea. This chapter will evaluate the past efforts of both the North and South Korean governments at unification. I will identify the reasons the unification proposals of both North and South Korea have failed and have not resulted in a unified Korea.

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>36</sup> Yang, 862.

## B. NORTH KOREAN UNIFICATION POLICIES

Since its founding, the primary objective of North Korea has been the unification of Korea on its own terms. Shortly after North Korea was formed its leaders stated that "the South is a complete colony and a military base of the United States, and the socio-economic structure of its society still displays semi-feudal characteristics with no substantial changes from those under Japanese rule."<sup>38</sup> This antagonistic view towards South Korea and the United States has been a constant theme in North Korea's policies toward the South.

Although the original constitution of North Korea does not specifically mention unification, the preamble to the Korean Worker's Party clearly states that:

The immediate aim of the Workers Party of Korea lies in guaranteeing the complete victory of socialism in the northern half of the Republic, and in carrying out the tasks of anti-imperialist, anti-feudal democratic revolution on a nation-wide scale... The Worker's Party of Korea struggles for the liberation of the southern half of our country from American imperialist aggressive forces and internal reactionary rule, and for the attainment of complete unification of

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 154.

<sup>38</sup> Peace and Cooperation White Paper on Korean Unification, (Seoul: Ministry of National Unification, 1996), 68.

the country by firmly uniting the broad popular masses of North and South Korea...<sup>39</sup>

From the start, North Korea has viewed unification as the North taking over the South. The Northern socialist system would be imposed on the South and the imperialist Americans would be kicked out.

The invasion of the South Korea by North Korean forces in 1950 was clearly an attempt to unify Korea under the terms of North Korea. Kim Il Sung expected the war to last less than a month. He expected his forces would "reunify our fatherland, and completely liberate the people in the southern half from the police state tyranny of the United States imperialists and the Syngman Rhee clique."<sup>40</sup> The end result of the Korean War was not unification but an even stronger divide in Korea. The Korean War would end up being North Korea's first failed attempt at unification.

## **1. The 1960's**

The armistice that ended the Korean War resulted in a military stalemate along the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. The South has

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<sup>39</sup> Translated in Robert A Scalapino and Chong-sik Lee, Communism in Korea, Part II: The Society (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), p. 1332, quoted in Nicholas Eberstadt, "North Korea's Unification Policy", *Korea and World Affairs*, Vol. XX, No.3 (Fall 1996): 407.

<sup>40</sup> Eberstadt, 410.



been under the constant threat of another invasion by the North ever since. Despite some incursions into the demilitarized zone by North Korean forces, they have not attempted to invade the South since the end of the war. The stalemate changed North Korea's strategy from a military victory over the South to peaceful reunification.

In August 1960, North Korea proposed peaceful unification of Korea through a series of transitional stages which would result in a Confederation. The proposed Confederation would leave the existing political systems in the North and South intact. However, the North and South would each appoint an equal number of delegates to a Supreme National Congress.

The proposal was dead on arrival because North Korea saw the confederation as a means of liberating South Korea from the colonial rule of the United States. In other words, the South Korean political system would eventually be absorbed and replaced by the northern system. This was obviously unacceptable to the South Korea.<sup>41</sup>

## 2. The 1970's

In the early 1970's there was a thaw in relations between North and South Korea. South Korea was completely taken by surprise by the Sino-United States rapprochement in 1972. However, the Sino-United States rapprochement encouraged North and South Korea to enter into direct negotiations for the first time.<sup>42</sup>

The subsequent meetings in 1972 resulted in a joint communiqué which declared that the unification of Korea should occur through:

1. independent Korean efforts without being subject to external imposition or interference,
2. peaceful means, and
3. a greater national unity transcending differences in ideas, ideologies and systems.<sup>43</sup>

For the first time, hopes were raised that Korea could be peacefully unified.

This first contact was but a brief respite in tensions between the North and South. North and South Korea immediately began to argue over the meaning of the word

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<sup>41</sup> Metzler, 109.

<sup>42</sup> Young Whan Kihl, Korea and the World, (Boulder: Westview, 1994) 134.

<sup>43</sup> Quansheng Zhao and Robert Sutter, eds., Politics of Divided Nations: China, Korea, Germany and Vietnam- Unification, Conflict Resolution and Political Development, Occasional Papers/Reprint Series in Contemporary Asian Studies, no. 5-1991 (106), (Baltimore: University of Maryland, 1991) 62.



"independent" in the communiqué. North Korea interpreted independent to mean that South Korea would kick out the American forces. South Korea argued that the American forces had been blessed by the United Nations and as such could not be regarded as foreign.<sup>44</sup>

On 23 June 1973, South Korea proposed dual membership in the United Nations for North and South Korea. North Korea was enraged and countered with a single-seat proposal for both Koreas.<sup>45</sup> By 1974, North Korea would pull out of negotiations and refuse any more high level exchanges with South Korean officials.

On 23 June 1973, North Korea floated the proposal for another Confederation, which would unify the North and the South. The name of this Confederation would be the Confederal Republic of Koryo. The selection of the name showed insensitivity on the part of North Korea. The name Koryo was taken from the northern Koryo Dynasty of 918-1392.<sup>46</sup> The inference that could be made from the name was that a modern northern "Dynasty" would take over and dominate the South. The Five Point Program included:

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<sup>44</sup> Rinn-Sup Shinn, "Prospects for Change in North Korea's Policy Toward South Korea", *Korea Observer*, Vol. XXIV, No. 4 (Winter 1993): 462.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Zhao and Sutter, 108.

1. clearance of military confrontation,
2. cooperation and exchanges in various areas,
3. convocation of a Great National Congress
4. formation of a Confederation and
5. entry into the United Nations under a single name.<sup>47</sup>

Besides the problem with the name, there were some other problems with the proposal. The clearance of military confrontation certainly meant the withdrawal of American troops from South Korea. At this stage, South Korea could not unilaterally defend itself against North Korea and could not consider removing American troops. Also at this time, South Korea was seeking a seat in the United Nations. East and West Germany had just been granted admittance into the United Nations under two names. South Korea was not willing to enter the United Nations under a single name and single seat.

### **3. The 1980's**

In October 1980, the Sixth Congress of the Korean Workers Party proposed a slightly modified reunification

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<sup>47</sup> Peace and Cooperation White Paper on Korean Unification, 76.

plan. The new plan would be called the Democratic Confederal Republic of Koryo. Like the last plan, this one also contained proposals that were unacceptable to the South. They were:

1. replacement of the incumbent South Korean regime,
2. abolishment of the anticommunist and national security laws,
3. legalization of all political parties and social organizations, and
4. release of imprisoned democratic activists and patriots.<sup>48</sup>

The first proposition could be discarded at face value. The next three propositions were all aimed at legalizing the communist party in South Korea and releasing all pro-Communist activists. These conditions were again obviously unacceptable to South Korea.

#### **4. The 1990's**

In the 1990's, North Korea shifted its position on unification. In a 1991 New Year's message, Kim Il Sung stated that "unification of the fatherland should be

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

achieved on the principle that neither side takes over the other or is taken over by the other and in the form of a confederation with one people, one nation, two systems, and two governments."<sup>49</sup> He devised a ten-point plan called the Program of Great Unity for the Korean Nation. The Ninth Supreme People's assembly subsequently adopted the plan on 7 April 1993. The plan contains the following specific points:

#### NORTH KOREA'S TEN POINT PROGRAM

1. A unified state, independent, peaceful and neutral, should be founded through the great unity of the whole nation.
2. Unity should be based on patriotism and the spirit of national independence;
3. Unity should be achieved on the principle of promoting coexistence, co-prosperity and common interests, and subordinating everything to the cause of national reunification;
4. All manner of political disputes that foment division and confrontation between the fellow countrymen should be stopped and unity achieved;
5. People should dispel fears of invasion from either the South or the North;
6. People should join hands on the road to national reunification, not rejecting each other for the difference in isms and principles;

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid. 77.

7. People should protect material and spiritual wealth of individual persons and organizations;

8. The nation should understand, trust and unite with one another through contacts, travels and dialogues;

9. The Koreans in the North, the South, and overseas should strengthen solidarity with one another on the way to national reunification; and

10. All Koreans who have contributed to the unity of the nation and to the cause of the national reunification should be highly respected.<sup>50</sup>

At first glance, the proposal was fairly benign and palatable. It basically amounted to the peaceful coexistence of two independent States that would be merged at some uncertain time in the distant future. However, in April 1993, North Korea demanded that South Korea must first satisfy the following four pre-conditions. South Korea must:

1. remove itself from the United States nuclear umbrella,

2. disengage from any joint military exercises with foreign troops,

3. oust the United States troops from the peninsula, and

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<sup>50</sup> *North Korea News* (Seoul), No. 679 (April 19, 1993), 1-2; and *Korea Report* (Tokyo, Japan), No. 272 (April 1993), ("DPRK President Proposes 10-Point Policy Platform for Great Unity of Korean Nation"), 1-6 quoted in John C. H. Oh, "Policy Alternatives for Uniting the Two Koreas", *Korea Observer*, Vol. XXIV, No. 4 (Winter 1993): 483.



4. adopt a policy of non-reliance on foreign powers, particularly on the United States and Japan concerning political, military, and economic matters.<sup>51</sup>

On the surface the ten-point program seemed to be a major policy shift for North Korea. For the first time North Korea was willing to accept peaceful coexistence as the first step toward unification. The four pre-conditions changed this perception immediately. North Korea had not changed positions and was still calling for a total withdrawal of American troops.

#### **5. Conclusion on North Korea's Unification Policies**

For obvious reasons, South Korea has not adopted any of the North Korea's proposals for unification. The proposals have been so unrealistic that they amount to pure propaganda. North Korea has always insisted on the withdrawal of American forces as a precondition for unification. The South is not willing to risk another invasion by the North and therefore will not remove American forces unless there is a massive disarming in the North. The proposals for unification from the North all assume that a socialist system will replace the South

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<sup>51</sup> Oh, 484.



Korean system. The South Korean people will not give up their newfound democracy without a fight. The North Korean economy is in shambles while the South Korean economy continues to boom (as of this writing the South Korean economy is showing some signs of weakness). It is unrealistic and naïve of the North to expect the South to adopt their system.

### **C. SOUTH KOREAN UNIFICATION POLICIES**

Unification of Korea has been a policy goal of both North and South Korea since their inception. However, unification has been a much greater priority for the North than the South. While always a goal in the South, the priority placed on unification has depended on which regime was in power.<sup>52</sup>

Like the North Korean government the South Korean government also views itself as the only legitimate government on the peninsula. Based on its interpretation of the United Nations General Assembly resolution in 1948 which says that the South Korean government is the only legitimate government in Korea. As such, South Korea views

North Korean government as an anti-state organization, which is illegally occupying a portion of Korea.<sup>53</sup>

The administration of Roh Tae-woo placed the highest emphasis on unification. It was the Roh government, which implemented the Nordpolitik policy. The Roh government also developed the Korean National Unification Program and negotiated the Basic Agreement on Reconciliation, Non-Aggression and Exchanges and Cooperation with North Korea. These three policies have been the most comprehensive plans by South Korea to unify Korea.

### **1. Nordpolitik**

The great success of West Germany's Ostpolitik, or Eastern Policy, encouraged South Korea to develop its Northern Policy. The essential elements of Ostpolitik were that in exchange for West Germany recognition of East Germany's sovereignty, Eastern European nations would normalize relations with West Germany. German reunification would essentially be put on the back burner and solved at a later date.

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<sup>52</sup> B. C. Koh, "A Comparison of Unification Policies," in *Korea and the World Beyond the Cold War*, ed. Young Whan Kihl (Boulder: Westview, 1994): 153-155.

South Korea's Foreign Minister Lee Bum-Suk first stated the term Nordpolitik or northern policy in 1983 in a speech. His definition of the northern policy was:

Our most important foreign policy goal in the 1980's is to prevent the recurrence of war on the Korean Peninsula, and our most important diplomatic task is to pursue the northern policy successfully which aims at normalizing relations with the Soviet Union and China.<sup>54</sup>

While the policy was not directly aimed at North Korea, President Roh defined the northern policy as "I will approach the communist block more vigorously in order to realize peaceful coexistence between South and North Korea and ultimately unification."<sup>55</sup> The principle of the northern policy was to establish relations with the Soviet Union and China. If the South Koreans were able to successfully establish relations with two of North Korea's allies it would increase stability on the peninsula.

South Korea also hoped that North Korea would come to appreciate the economic benefits that China and the Soviet

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<sup>53</sup> Kim Hak-joon, "Korean Reunification: A Seoul Perspective," in Korea under Roh Tae-woo: Democratisation, Northern Policy and Inter-Korean Relations, ed. James Cotton (Canberra: ANU Printery, 1993) 278-279.

<sup>54</sup> Lee Bum-Suk, *Sonjin Choguk reul wihan Oegyo* (Diplomacy for the Creation of the Advanced Fatherland), a speech delivered at the National Defense University, 29 June 1983, quoted in Sang-Seek Park, "Northern Diplomacy and Inter-Korean Relations," in Korea Under Roh Tae-woo: Democratization, Northern Policy and Inter-Korean Relations, ed. James Cotton (Canberra: ANU Printery, 1993), 218.

Union had realized by opening to the west. If North Korea did appreciate the benefits, then maybe North Korea would start to open up also. Hopefully this opening up process would ultimately bring North Korea into relationships with "normal nations" and increase stability on the peninsula.<sup>56</sup>

The northern policy has been extremely successful for South Korea. As a result of the policy, South Korea established diplomatic relations with Hungary and Poland in 1989, the Soviet Union, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Romania and Mongolia in 1990 and the PRC in 1992.<sup>57</sup>

While the northern policy was an unqualified success for South Korea, it is hard to determine if it had any effect on the stability of the peninsula. If it had any effect on North Korea it was to isolate them even more. South Korea is now on friendly terms with North Korea's former allies.

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<sup>55</sup> Roh Tae-woo, *Widae han Botong Saram eu Sidae* (Era of the Great Common Man) (Seoul: Eulyu Munhwasa, 1987), 229, quoted in Sang-Seek Park, 218.

<sup>56</sup> Kim Kook-chin, "Seoul's Nordpolitik," in *Korea 1991 The Road to Peace*, eds. Michael J. Mazarr, John Q. Blodgett, Cha Young-koo, and William J. Taylor, Jr. (Boulder: Westview, 1991) 95.

<sup>57</sup> Kim Hak-joon, "The Republic of Korea's Northern Policy: Origin Development, and Prospects," in *Korea Under Roh Tae-woo: Democratization, Northern Policy and Inter Korean Relations*, ed. James Cotton (Canberra: ANU Printery, 1993) 260-262.

## **2. Korean National Unification Program**

The Roh plan for unification is a step by step merging of the political systems of the North and South, which will ultimately result in unification. Roh said, "The Korean people are one, a unified Korea must be a single nation. No system for bringing the two parts of Korea together will accomplish genuine unification so long as it aims at perpetuating two states with differing ideologies,"<sup>58</sup> This statement is clearly aimed at North Korea's proposals for unification. Roh saw his plan as achieving a unified Korea while North Korea's plans would just perpetuate coexistence of two separate systems. Roh unveiled the Korean National Unification plan before the National assembly on 11 September 1989.<sup>59</sup>

The plan consists of four stages, which would eventually lead to unification. During the first stage mutual confidence would be built through increased inter-Korean dialogue. A North-South summit would be convened to adopt a National Community Charter. The charter would contain "a comprehensive package of agreements covering a basic formula for attaining peace and unification, mutual

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<sup>58</sup> Metzler, 84.



non-aggression arrangements, and the founding of the Korean Commonwealth as an interim stage toward unification."<sup>60</sup>

During the second stage, a Korean Commonwealth would be created. The Korean Commonwealth would integrate the two parts of Korea and create a common bond among Koreans. The increased economic, cultural and social ties would merge the Korean people into a homogenous group. This would lead to the third stage.<sup>61</sup>

The Korean Commonwealth would also have a legislative body consisting of:

1. A Council of Representatives consisting of 100 members with equal numbers representing the North and South;
2. Joint Secretariat which would provide logistics support to the Council of Ministers and the Council of Representatives;
3. Council of Presidents consisting of chief executives from the North and South;
4. Council of Ministers chaired by the Prime Ministers of both the North and South. The Council would consist of approximately ten members.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Young Whan Kihl, "The Problem of Forming a Korean Commonwealth," *Korea Observer*, Vol. XXIV, No. 3 (Autumn 1993): 430-431.

<sup>60</sup> To Build a National Community through the Korean Commonwealth A Blueprint For Korean Unification, (Seoul: National Unification Board Republic of Korea, 1989) 14.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.



The proposed agenda for the Council of Ministers would be:

- a) The issue of reuniting dispersed families, whose members are estimated to total 10 million;
- b) The easing of political confrontation between the North and South;
- c) The prevention of costly and counterproductive inter-Korean rivalry on the world scene and the joint promotion of national interests including the interests of overseas Koreans;
- d) The opening of both North and South Korean societies and the promotion of multi-faceted inter-Korean exchanges, trade and cooperation;
- e) The fostering of a national culture;
- f) The formation of a common economic zone to achieve a common prosperity;
- g) The building of military confidence and implementation of arms control; and
- h) The replacement of the current Armistice Agreement with a peace agreement.<sup>63</sup>

During the fourth stage, a Council of Representatives would draft a constitution through democratic methods and procedures. The constitution would be used to merge the two Koreas into one nation. The final stage would be a

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 14-16.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 15-16.

free general election to select a unified legislature and a unified government.<sup>64</sup>

From the North Korean perspective there are three major flaws with the proposal. The first is that South Korea claims the proposal is keeping in spirit with the joint communiqué of 1972. The major stumbling block in the joint communiqué was the interpretation of the word independent. In the Commonwealth proposal South Korea spells out that "independent" does not mean that South Korea will have to cut off all ties with its traditional friends.<sup>65</sup>

According to this interpretation, American forces would not have to be withdrawn. The withdrawal of American forces has been a constant theme and pre-condition for all of North Korea's proposals for unification. North Korea will not accept the proposal unless this pre-condition is met.

The second flaw is that the proposal calls for free elections to select a unified government. The election would be one man one vote. Since South Korea's population is twice as large as North Korea's, the election would

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<sup>64</sup> Kihl, 431.

<sup>65</sup> "Korean Commonwealth", 19.

probably result in a pro-South government and a certain demise of the North Korean regime.

While North Korea has strongly supported unification since Korea was split in two, it has always expected that the North would consume the South. Free elections would not allow this to happen.

Finally, the proposal calls for replacing the Armistice Agreement with a peace treaty negotiated between the North and South. North Korea does not see the South as a signatory to the original Armistice and as such the South has no right to enter into negotiations to replace it.

While the South Korean proposal for unification may seem more reasonable than North Korea's proposals to the neutral observer at first glance, it is not acceptable to North Korea. If North Korea adopted the proposal it would result in the imposition of the South Korean system on North Korea. For this reason, the present regime in North Korea can never give it serious consideration.

### **3. Unification Efforts Under the Kim Young Sam Administration**

Early in his term, President Kim Young Sam took an active approach towards North Korea. He proposed summit

meetings that had already been agreed to under the Basic Agreement. His initial efforts to establish contact were rebuffed by North Korea, so he decided to wait and let North Korea initiate talks. During negotiations with former President Jimmy Carter over North Korea's nuclear program, Kim Il Sung supposedly agreed to a summit meeting with President Kim Young Sam. However, Kim Il Sung died of a heart attack before the meeting took place. Kim Il Sung's death brought President Kim's efforts to a temporary halt.<sup>66</sup>

Since Kim Il Sung's death in 1994, relations between North and South Korea have been strained. South Korea has delivered limited food aid to North Korea in hopes of reopening a discussion. On 16 April 1996, President Kim invited North Korea to enter into four way talks to settle the armistice which ended the Korean War. The participants would be the United States, the PRC, and North and South Korea.<sup>67</sup> Although preliminary meetings to discuss the four way talks have taken place little progress has been made. At the most recent set of meetings (as of this writing) on 18 and 19 September 1997, North Korea insisted that before

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<sup>66</sup> Young-Shik Kim, "South Korea-U.S. Relations and North Korea," *Korea and World Affairs* Vol. XX, No. 3 (Fall 1996): 487.

<sup>67</sup> Seongwhun Cheon, "The Four-Party Peace Meeting Proposal," *Korea and World Affairs* Vol. XX No. 2 (Summer 1996): 168.

another meeting could take place, there must first be a deal to withdraw American troops from South Korea.<sup>68</sup> On, 21 November 1997, North Korea dropped its preconditions and agreed to attend four party talks in Geneva in December 1997.

Despite President Kim's best efforts, he like his predecessors has had limited success in bringing North Korea to the bargaining table to begin discussions to unify Korea. North Korea continues to set the unrealistic precondition that American troops must first leave South Korea. Understandably, South Korea will continue to refuse this pre-condition.

**D. BASIC AGREEMENT ON RECONCILIATION, NON-AGGRESSION AND EXCHANGES AND COOPERATION (BASIC AGREEMENT)**

The Basic Agreement is *not* a unification policy of the ROK but instead is a by-product of the inter-Korean peace process. If implemented, it will lead to peaceful coexistence between the South and North. As such, I have incorporated it into this chapter to provide background for subsequent sections.

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<sup>68</sup> Keith B. Richburg, "North Korea On Brink of New Crisis," *The Washington Post*, 18 October 1997, A1.



The Basic Agreement was negotiated between North and South Korea during eight sessions in 1990 and 1991. Negotiations concluded with the signature of the document by representatives of North and South Korea on 13 December 1991.<sup>69</sup>

The Basic Agreement is divided into four chapters and contains twenty-eight articles. Chapter one deals with South-North reconciliation, chapter two deals with South-North non-aggression, chapter three deals with South-North exchanges and chapter four deals with amendments and effectuation.<sup>70</sup>

Chapter one spells out the peaceful coexistence between the North and South. Articles include:

1. mutual recognition and respect for each others systems,
2. no interference in each others internal affairs,
3. the two sides shall not slander or vilify each other,
4. no actions of sabotage,
5. both sides should endeavor to replace the Armistice with a peace treaty,

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<sup>69</sup> Han-Kyo Kim, "Reconciliation and Cooperation between the Two Koreas in the Era of Globalization," *Korea Observer*, Vol. XXV No.4 (Winter 1994) 450.

<sup>70</sup> Kihl, Appendix B.



6. the two sides shall not compete against each other in the international arena,

7. establish liaison offices in Panmunjon three months following the signing of the agreement, and

8. establish high level talks to discuss implementation of the agreement.

Chapter II spells out non-aggression between the two sides and includes:

9. commitment not to use force against each other,

10. differences will be resolved peacefully,

11. military Demarcation line will be respected,

12. joint South-North Military Commission will be established,

13. establish a telephone hot line, and

14. a joint Military Committee will be established to ensure the implementation of the agreement.

Chapter III spells out exchange and cooperation and includes:

15. the two sides shall engage economic exchange including joint ventures,

16. exchanges in technology, education, literature etc.,

17. promote intra-Korean travel,

18. free correspondence between the people in both  
Koreas,

19. reconnect railroads, and

20. link telephones and postal service.<sup>71</sup>

The signing of the treaty brought great hope that the two sides would finally be able to coexist. The establishment of the liaison office was most important, as it would encourage dialogue between the two sides. However, the agreement was never implemented and North and South are as isolated from one and another as they have ever been.

## **E. CONCLUSION**

The unification efforts of both North and South Korea have failed so far because their political and economic systems are diametrically opposed. Both profess to want unification but each side insists on unification under its own terms. The only way to truly unify Korea is under one system or the other. Neither side is willing to give up their own system so real unification cannot occur until one side concedes or collapses.

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

Under the current situation, the best that can be hoped for is peaceful coexistence. If implemented, the Basic Agreement would enable the North and South to peacefully coexist. However it has yet to be implemented and there are no indications that it will be in the foreseeable future.



#### **IV. FACTORS INDICATING POSSIBLE COLLAPSE OF NORTH KOREA**

##### **A. CURRENT CRISIS IN NORTH KOREA**

Since its founding, North Korea has been one of the most closed and isolated countries the world has ever known. As such, foreign observers and analysts have had a difficult time in accurately assessing internal conditions in North Korea. Despite this difficulty, several factors that can be independently verified now merge to paint a bleak picture of conditions within North Korea. These factors are North Korea's political isolation from the rest of the world, a failing economy, the ongoing food shortages, and ever-increasing numbers of high level defectors. In this chapter, I will carefully look at each of these factors and determine if they have had an effect on North Korea's stability.

Due to these conditions, many Korea experts and regional security specialists now speculate that North Korea is on the verge of both economic and political collapse. For example, in congressional testimony on 15 March 1996, General Gary Luck, the commander of U.S. and United Nations forces in Korea said that, "the question is

not will this country disintegrate but rather how will it disintegrate, by implosion or explosion, and when."<sup>72</sup> Also in congressional testimony on 17 April 1996, Dr. Marvin Ott, a professor at the National War College in Washington D.C., stated that "the nearly five decade contest for supremacy between the two Korean states is over. There can be no doubt that a unified Korea will be ruled from Seoul, not Pyongyang."<sup>73</sup>

On 11 December 1996, while testifying before the Senate Intelligence Committee the outgoing director of the Central Intelligence Agency, John Deutch, said that "within the next two or three years, North Korea will either make war, make peace, or implode."<sup>74</sup> His analysis is obviously based on highly classified U.S. intelligence.

Many other scholars share these views.<sup>75</sup> The central question revolves around how, and not if, North Korea will collapse.<sup>76</sup> The purpose of this chapter is not to determine

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<sup>72</sup> Bill Gertz, "Pyongyang's Collapse 'inevitable,'" *The Washington Times*, 25 March 1996, 17.

<sup>73</sup> U.S. Congress, House, Committee on International Relations, Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific, Security in Northeast Asia: From Okinawa to the DMZ, hearing, 104<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., 17 April 1996 (Washington: GPO, 1996), 83.

<sup>74</sup> "Korea's Twin Crisis", *The Economist*, February 22<sup>nd</sup> - 28<sup>th</sup> 1997, 45.

<sup>75</sup> For example, see Nicholas Eberstadt, "Hastening Korean Unification," *Foreign Affairs* (March/April 1997): 77-92 and Ki-hwan Kim, "North Korea at the Critical Crossroads," *Korea Focus on Current Topics* Vol. 5, No. 3 (May-June 1997): 1-14.

<sup>76</sup> Contrasting viewpoints are assessed in chapter IV.



when North Korea will collapse. I will however look at each of the factors that has led to such great instability in North Korea and try determine if North Korea really is ripe for collapse.

## **B. NORTH KOREA'S INCREASING INTERNATIONAL ISOLATION**

North Korea has been extremely isolated from much of the world, particularly the Western world, since its establishment in 1948. North Korea has therefore relied heavily on the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the former Soviet Block for much of its international support. This traditional support system has largely vanished because of the unqualified success of South Korea's Northern Policy and the subsequent collapse of the Soviet Union.

### **1. Soviet Union/Russia**

South Korea's Northern Policy was aimed at establishing diplomatic relations with the communist block in order to increase stability on the Korean Peninsula. It would begin to bear fruit with the normalization of relations with Hungary in 1989 and culminated with the normalization of relations with all of Eastern Europe by

the end of 1991. Additionally, South Korea normalized relations with the Soviet Union on 30 September 1990. This was a severe blow to North Korea.<sup>77</sup>

The unexpected collapse of the Soviet Block in 1991 was also a great blow to North Korea. As a result of the Soviet collapse, North Korea not only lost one of its largest benefactors but also lost one of its few political supporters in the international community. Following the Soviet collapse, relations between Russia and North Korea continued to deteriorate. In February 1993, Russia sent a delegation to North Korea headed by Deputy Foreign Minister George Kunadze. Although unsuccessful, his mission was to renegotiate the cornerstone of the Soviet-North Korea 1961 Friendship Treaty, by removing the military assistance clause. North Korea's refusal to negotiating an end to the military clause led Russia to unilaterally scrap it.<sup>78</sup>

In September 1995, Russia advised North Korea that it did not intend to extend the 1961 treaty on friendship, cooperation and mutual assistance which included the military assistance clause. The treaty expired on 10

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<sup>77</sup> North Korea The Foundations for Military Strength (Washington: Defense Intelligence Agency, 1996), 3.

<sup>78</sup> "Asia 1994 Yearbook A Review Of The Events Of 1993," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, (1995): 149.

September 1995. It is doubtful in 1997 that Russia would come to the aid of North Korea in any military conflict.<sup>79</sup>

## **2. People's Republic of China (PRC)**

As a result of South Korea's Northern Policy, the PRC restored diplomatic relations with South Korea on 24 August 1990. Since diplomatic relations have been restored, the PRC has enthusiastically promoted South Korean investments in, and technology transfers to, the PRC. The new relationship between North Korea's last major supporter and its arch-rival was undoubtedly a severe blow to North Korea. Although the PRC restored relations with South Korea, it did not abrogate the Sino-DPRK Friendship Treaty's military clause.<sup>80</sup>

One measure of the value the PRC places on its new relations with South Korea was seen during the crisis surrounding the Hwang Jang-yop defection. On 12 February 1997, Hwang Jong-yop one of the leading members of Pyongyang's ruling circle sought asylum at the South Korean Embassy in Beijing. North Korea strongly objected and

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<sup>79</sup> "Asia 1996 Yearbook A Review Of The Events Of 1995," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, (1997): 150.

sought his return. The PRC was caught in a diplomatic quandary and was forced to choose sides. The PRC had to decide whether it would support its long time ally North Korea or support its newfound trading partner South Korea. In 1996, trade between the PRC and South Korea topped \$19.9 billion while trade between the PRC and North Korea would amount to only \$566 million.<sup>81</sup>

To North Korea's surprise, the PRC was unwilling to risk its trade with South Korea, and turned a blind eye to ideology and its former ally. The PRC sided with South Korea. In an effort to allow North Korea to save some face, the PRC insisted that Hwang would not be allowed to go directly to South Korea but instead would first have to go to a third country. Despite this translucent effort to allow North Korea to save face, the damage had been done.<sup>82</sup>

### **C. NORTH KOREA'S FAILING ECONOMY**

Because of the closed nature of North Korea, it is difficult to determine precise economic statistics. The economic statistics produced by the Bank of Korea (in South

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<sup>80</sup> Paul H. Kreisberg, "Threat Environment for a United Korea", *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis* Vol. VIII No. 1 (Summer 1996): 81-82.

<sup>81</sup> Amy Woo, "East Asia: China Treads Korean Tightrope," *International Press Service English News Wire*, 3 March 1997.

Korea) are considered to be the most accurate and are widely quoted in the press and scholarly journals. If these figures are to be believed, North Korea has registered a consistent negative annual growth in GDP every year since 1990. There are two primary reasons for this trend. They are the failure of Juche ideology and the collapse of the Soviet Block. Each has had a profound effect on North Korea's failing economy.

### **1. Juche Ideology**

One cannot begin to discuss North Korea's socialist command economy without first having a clear understanding of the Juche system or ideology. Juche ideology was best described by Kim Il Sung as:

Being the master of revolution and construction in one's own country. This means holding fast to an independent position, rejecting dependence on others, using one's own brains, believing in one's own strength, displaying the revolutionary spirit of self-reliance and thus solving one's own problems for oneself on one's own responsibility under all circumstances.<sup>83</sup>

While many factors have contributed to North Korea's current economic crisis, the impact of Juche ideology

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<sup>82</sup> Yong-ho Kim, "Hwang Jang-yop: His Defection and Its Impact on North Korea", *Korea Focus* Vol. 5, No. 2 (March-April 1997): 37-40.



cannot be overstressed. Juche ideology led to direct party management of production. Juche was responsible for short-term economic gains but has not been able to produce long term gains. Like many other socialist countries, North Korea's leaders mistakenly emphasized heavy industry over light industry and the production of consumer goods. In accordance with Juche ideology, North Korea did not place much emphasis on gaining western foreign investment and technology transfers. As a result, North Korea's factories are inefficient and much of its technology is outdated. North Korean products cannot compete on the world free market.<sup>84</sup>

## **2. Collapse of the Soviet Bloc**

North Korea's economy was intrinsically entwined with the economy of the Soviet Bloc. The Soviet Bloc, through favorable trade agreements largely subsidized North Korea's economy. North Korea came to rely on barter trade with nations in the Soviet Bloc. The main barter/export commodities were steel, steel products, cement, non-ferrous

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<sup>83</sup> Quoted in Ilpyong J. Kim, Communist Politics in North Korea, (New York: Praeger, 1975) 52-53.



metals, clinker for furnace bricks, with minor exports of marine products and fruit. In exchange, North Korea imported food grains, petroleum and fertilizers. In 1990, the Soviet Union began to end the barter system and insisted on hard currency for its exports. The end of barter trade was a severe blow to North Korea's economy.<sup>85</sup>

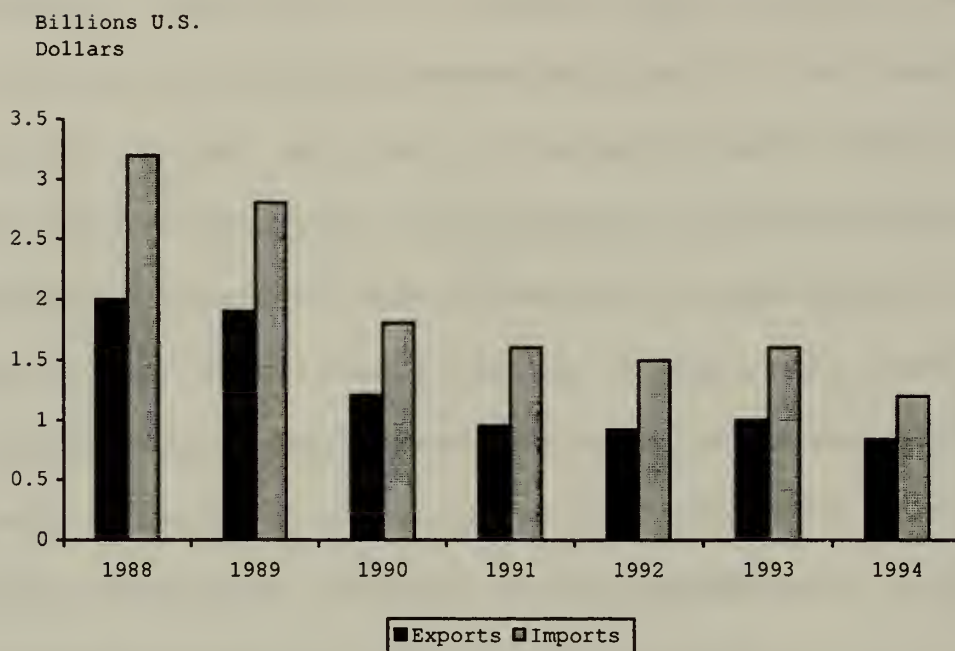
Under the barter system, North Korea was allowed to maintain consistent negative trade imbalances. The Soviets tired of this de facto aid to North Korea. The hard currency requirement had a dramatic negative effect on North Korea's foreign trade. It is no coincidence that North Korea began to register negative growth rates when the favorable trade agreements with the Soviet Bloc ended. Figure 1 illustrates what effect the change in Soviet policy had on North Korea's trade.

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<sup>84</sup> Barry K. Gills, Prospects for Peace and Stability in Northeast Asia: The Korean Conflict, (London: The Research Institute for the Study of Conflict and Terrorism, 1995): 8.

<sup>85</sup> U.S. Congress, House, Committee on International Relations, Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific, U.S.-North Korean Relations: From the Agreed Framework to Food Aid, hearing, 104<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., 19 March 1996 (Washington: GPO, 1996), 72.

Figure 1. North Korea's Overall Trade Trends<sup>86</sup>



North Korea's direct imports from the Soviet Union also suffered as a result of the new policy. In 1990, North Korea imported just over \$1.7 billion dollars from the Soviet Union. By 1991, Soviet imports would be reduced by over 70 percent and would drop to \$600 million. Today, imports from Russia are less than ten percent of the 1987-90 averages.<sup>87</sup>

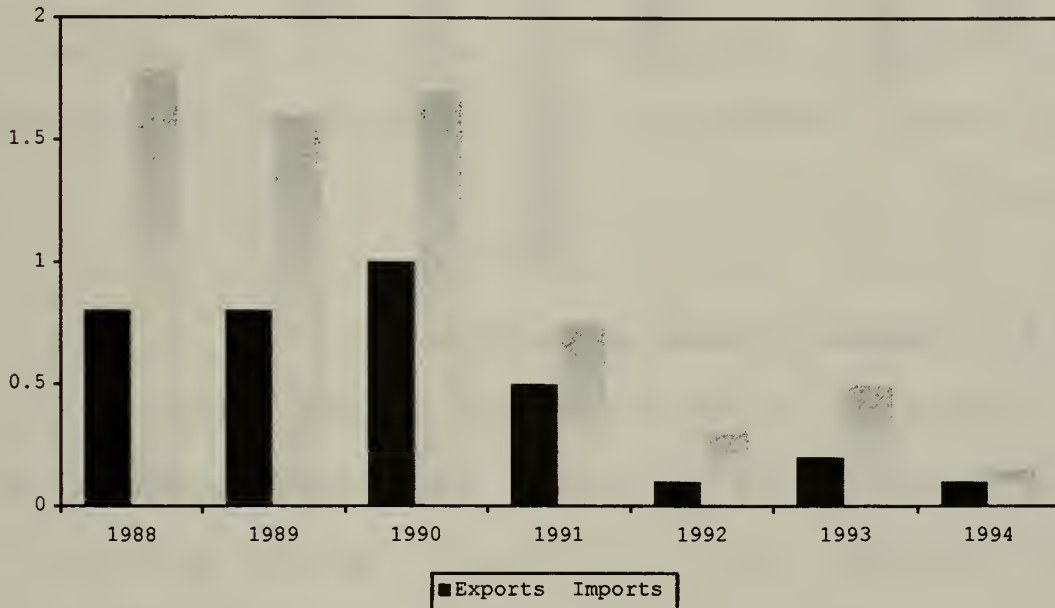
<sup>86</sup> Young-Ho Park, "political Change in North Korea: Is There Any Possibility for System Transformation?," *The Korean Journal for Defense Analysis* Vol. VII No. 2 (Winter 1995): 226.

<sup>87</sup> William J. Taylor Jr. and Abraham Kim, "Korean Security in an Insecure Post-Cold War Era," in *Change and Challenge on the Korean Peninsula: Developments, Trends and Issues*, eds., Jae H. Ku and Tae Hwan Ok (Washington: The Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1996), 36.

Figure 2 depicts the trend in trade between North Korea and Russia/CIS countries between 1988 and 1994.

Figure 2. North Korea Trade with CIS and Russia<sup>88</sup>

Billions of U.S.  
Dollars



Source: National Unification Board

One of the key Soviet exports to North Korea was crude oil. When the Soviet Union began to insist on hard currency in exchange for crude oil, North Korea was unable to pay for it. Hence, crude oil imports from the Soviet Union which amounted to 800,000 tons in 1991 would drop to 30,000 tons by 1992. North Korea's other main supplier of

crude oil, the PRC, also began to insist that payment be made in hard currency in 1992. The PRC also raised the subsidized price they had been charging North Korea to near international market prices. As a result, a severe energy crisis developed in North Korea. Many factories are now estimated to be working at less than half of capacity due to a shortage of energy and raw materials. The end of the Soviet support system profoundly effected the North Korean economy.<sup>89</sup>

### **3. Economic Trends in North Korea**

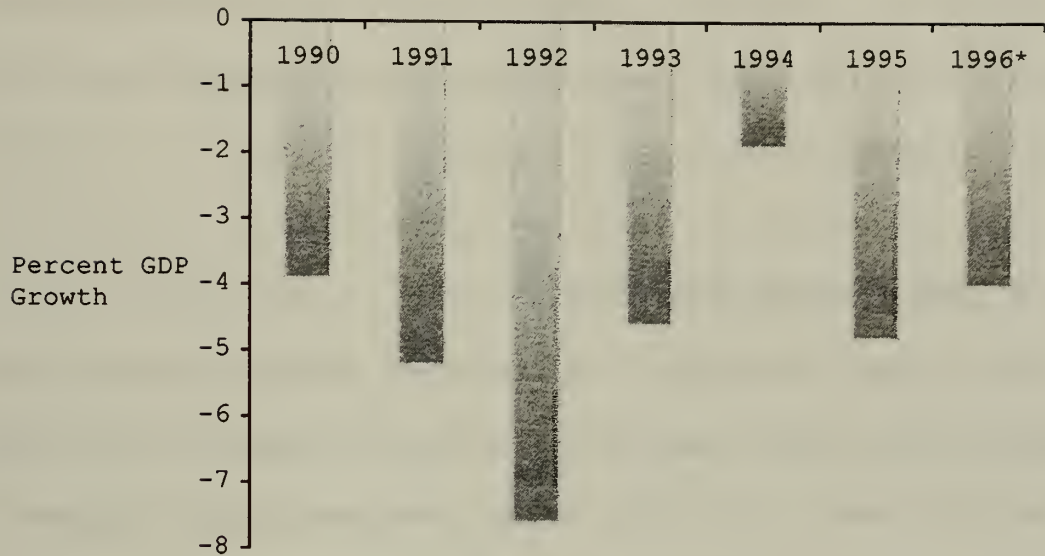
Largely due to Juche ideology and the collapse of the Soviet Block, North Korea has experienced negative GDP growth every year since 1990. Figure 3 depicts this trend.

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<sup>88</sup> North Korea the Foundations for Military Strength- Update 1995, 8.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

Figure 3. North Korea's GDP



\* Estimates by ICP, Moscow  
Source: Bank of Korea<sup>90</sup>

#### D. FOOD SHORTAGE

Due to geographic constraints, less than 20 percent of the land in North Korea is arable. As a result, North Korea has a difficult time in producing enough food for its population even if weather conditions are perfect. Massive flooding in 1995 followed by drought in 1996 has left North Korea with a serious food shortage. Although it is easy to

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<sup>90</sup> Jae Hoon Shim, "Darkness at Noon," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 10 October 1996, 30.

blame the current food crisis on poor weather and bad luck, many other factors have also contributed to North Korea's agricultural problems. Among them are shortages of fertilizer, fuel, and hard currency to purchase food from other countries.

### **1. The Current Food Crisis**

On August 4, 1997 the United Nations World Food Program and other relief charities reported that the current drought in North Korea has destroyed up to 70 percent of this year's maize crop. If these figures are correct, North Korea will need to import 1.5 million tons of maize this year to feed its population. Due to its failing economy, North Korea is short on foreign hard currency and is unable to purchase the required food imports on the world market.<sup>91</sup>

In order to prevent mass starvation, the once proud North Korean government that is based on Juche ideology has been forced to beg for international aid. Since 1995 when North Korea first began to request aid, it has received over 320,000 metric tons of food aid from the United Nations World Food Program. The United Nations World Food



Program estimates that North Korea has also received another \$115.6 million in food aid from the PRC, other nations and non-governmental organizations.<sup>92</sup>

If foreign sources of international aid dry up, North Korea will face an enormous humanitarian crisis. Large portions of the population will be in danger of starving. It is impossible to predict how the North Korean people would react to such a situation. However, it is hard to imagine that the citizens would idly stand by as their government slowly starves them.

## **2. Long-term Prospects**

North Korea faces a serious challenge if it decides to solve its long-term food problems. Fundamental changes in the economy and the agricultural sector will have to be made. Although North Korea can increase the amount of arable land through tidal reclamation programs and terracing hillsides, these programs would be very expensive. If the North Korean population continues to grow, North Korea will have to increase the amount of food it imports or receives as aid.

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<sup>91</sup> "The Horrors of North Korea," *The Economist*, 9 Aug. 1997, 34.

The only way for North Korea to increase food imports is to increase its foreign currency reserves or find a country that is willing to barter goods for food. In order to increase foreign currency reserves North Korea must increase its foreign trade or procure foreign investment capital to rebuild its industrial base and modernize obsolete factories. North Korea also needs to increase fertilizer and oil imports in order to increase food production.

North Korea has made some attempts to secure foreign investment by establishing a free-trade zone called Rajin-Sonbong. To lure foreign investors, North Korea would allow fully foreign-owned enterprises, a five-year tax holiday and a 14 percent corporate income tax rate. Foreigners would also be able to enter the zone without visas.<sup>93</sup> Although there has been limited interest by some foreign companies, most have been turned off because of a lack of infrastructure such as roads, electricity and water supply.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Keith B. Richburg, "Beyond a Wall of Secrecy, Devastation," *The Washington Post*, 19 Oct. 1997, A23.

<sup>93</sup> Selig B. Harrison, "Promoting a Soft Landing in Korea," *Foreign Policy* (Spring 1997): 64.

<sup>94</sup> Shim, 26.

Another way for North Korea to increase agricultural productivity would be to follow the Chinese agricultural reform model. In the late 1970s, Chinese planners realized that their agricultural policies were not working. Their solution was to de-collectivize agriculture and institute a contract system. Under this system, contracts were made between production teams and individual households. Farmers were allowed to keep the surplus production and dispose of it as they desired. They could save it for themselves, sell it to the government or sell it on the market. The new policy effectively increased the incentive for the individual farmer to increase production. The policy resulted in a massive increase in production in the 1980s. Rural production in the 1980s increased by 250 percent.<sup>95</sup> To date, North Korea's leaders have refused to implement the Chinese model.

#### **E. DEFECTIONS**

In 1996, the number of defectors from North to South Korea was reported to be 51. When compared with the 38 who defected in 1995, it seems like a large increase. However

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<sup>95</sup> John King Fairbank, China a New History, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 411-12.

in 1994, 50 people defected from North to South. Although the numbers for 1997 are not in yet, there has been a change in the pattern of defections. What was surprising in 1997 was that defectors come from the ruling class of North Korea.<sup>96</sup>

On 12 February 1997, North Korea was stunned when Hwang Jang-Yop walked into the South Korean Embassy in Beijing and requested asylum. Hwang was the architect of Juche ideology and was a long-standing member of the ruling circle in North Korea. Although his stature in the party had decreased since the death of Kim Il Sung, Hwang was the international affairs secretary of the North Korean Workers Party.<sup>97</sup>

On 26 August 1997, North Korea was again stung by two high level defectors. Chang Song Gil, North Korea's ambassador to Egypt and his brother, Chang Sung Ho, a commercial counselor at the North Korean mission in Paris, both defected to the United States. The ambassador is the highest level diplomat to ever defect and is thought to have important information about North Korean weapons sales to countries in the Middle East. Additionally, Chang Sung

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<sup>96</sup> B. C. Koh, "South Korea in 1996 Internal Strains and External Challenges," *Asian Survey* Vol. XXXVII, No. 1 (Jan 1997): 14.

Ho's wife, who also defected, is considered to be a close personal friend of Kim Jong Il.<sup>98</sup>

Although it could be easy to misinterpret the meaning of the defections, one point is clear. These defections indicate that leaders of the ruling party do not totally support Kim Jong Il and are another indication that conditions in North Korea are unstable.

## **F. CONCLUSION**

Most scholars and regional security analysts agree that North Korea appears to be caught in a death spiral. Unless fundamental reforms are made and North Korea opens up to the rest of the world, the death spiral will continue. Without reforms, the death spiral will end in either a soft or hard landing unless it first implodes. The final outcome is up to Kim Il Sung and the rest of North Korea's leaders.

There are however a few scholars who disagree with this view and predict that North Korea will survive the current crisis. In the next chapter, I will take a brief look at this argument.

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<sup>97</sup> Young-ho Kim, 37-8.

<sup>98</sup> Norman Kempster, "U.S. Accepts 2 Defecting N. Korean Diplomats," *Los Angeles Times*, 27 Aug. 1997, Home Ed., A4.





## V. NORTH KOREA WILL SURVIVE

### A. TWO SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT

Those who study and analyze the meaning of the current crisis in North Korea tend to divide themselves into two schools of thought. The first school of thought argues that North Korea cannot get through the current crisis and is doomed to collapse.<sup>99</sup> While those in the first school may disagree on the timetable and scenarios under which North Korea will collapse, they do not diverge on the central premise. That is, North Korea's economic and political system cannot survive the current crisis and unification of the peninsula under the leadership of Seoul is a forgone conclusion. Their argument was outlined in the last chapter.

The second school of thought (the minority view) acknowledges that North Korea is currently in crisis but argues that it will somehow be able to manage the crisis and emerge as an intact nation.<sup>100</sup> In this chapter I will

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<sup>99</sup> For example see Selig B. Harrison, "Promoting a Soft Landing in Korea," *Foreign Policy* 106 (Spring 1997): 57-75 and Edward A. Olsen, "Coping with the Korean Peace Process: An American View," *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis* Vol. IX, No. 1 (Summer 1997): 159-180

<sup>100</sup> For example see, Young-dae Song, "Changes in North Korea and How to Respond," *Korea Focus* Vol. 5, No. 1 (Jan-Feb 1997): 22-32 and Marcus Noland, "Why North Korea Will Muddle Through," *Foreign Affairs* (July/August 1997): 105-118

analyze the argument that North Korea can muddle through the current crisis.

## **B. NORTH KOREA WILL MUDDLE THROUGH**

In his article "Why North Korea Will Muddle Through," Marcus Noland argues that North Korea will survive its current crisis. In this section I will outline and analyze each element of his argument.

### **1. Economy**

While Noland concedes that the North Korean economy is shrinking, he argues that foreign observers may have overestimated the amount it has shrunk. The most reliable and widely quoted estimates of the North Korean economy are those produced by the Bank of Korea (in South Korea). Noland argues that these estimates are based on classified data produced by South Korean intelligence. Hence, there is no way to verify independently the accuracy of the figures.

Noland may be correct. The Bank of Korea estimates of the North Korean economy could be way off the mark. However, while one could bicker about the accuracy of these figures, the overall economic trend in North Korea is

clear. The trend can be accurately verified by looking at North Korea's trade figures with two of its largest trading partners, Russia/CIS and the PRC. The trend indicates that the North Korean economy has steadily declined since 1990.

Noland also argues that, "the estimated fall in national income may well overstate the reduction in household welfare, since it is unlikely that such services as housing and education, which are undercounted in the socialist accounting system and are not amenable to physical measurement, have declined as much as manufactured output. These estimates of national income are therefore not necessarily indexes of hardship or political discontent."<sup>101</sup>

Noland implies that as long as the housing and education needs of the people are being met then there will be no hardship or political unrest. According to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, housing and food are two of the basic needs. If basic needs are not being met (which they clearly are not due to the food shortages) it is unlikely that the population is very concerned with education. Maslow says, "For the man who is extremely and dangerously

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<sup>101</sup> Marcus Noland, "Why North Korea Will Muddle Through," *Foreign Affairs* (July/August 1997): 107.

hungry, no other interests exist before food. He dreams food, he remembers food, he thinks about food, he emotes only about food, he perceives only food, and he wants only food."<sup>102</sup> One sure measure of discontent is whether or not you have enough to eat.

## **2. Food Shortages**

A variety of international organizations have studied North Korea's food shortages. Most organizations agree that North Korea's annual grain shortage amounts to two million tons.<sup>103</sup> Noland does not dispute this figure. Noland also agrees with the general assessment that the central planning mechanism and the public food distribution systems are fraying under pressure. But he says that we must be careful not to overstate the importance of these indications. Noland suggests that starvation may be fairly localized and falling disproportionately on certain socioeconomic groups, particularly rural nonfarm workers. Noland also argues that North Korea could subsist with no

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<sup>102</sup> Abraham H. Maslow, Motivation And Personality, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), 36.

<sup>103</sup> For example see Gye-dong Kim, "Kim Jong-il Regimes External Relations," *Korea Focus* Vol. 3, No. 5 (Sept-Oct 1995): 39-59 and Dong Bok Lee, "An Overview of ROK-DPRK Relations 1995," in Change and Challenge on the Korean Peninsula: Developments, Trends, and Issues.

or relatively modest external assistance despite the two million annual shortage in grain. However, he offers no evidence to support his position.<sup>104</sup>

Noland argues that food shortages are localized and primarily occurring in the countryside. However, foreigners who have recently returned from North Korea report that food shortages are now spreading to Pyongyang. For example, Carroll Bogert, a reporter for *Newsweek* magazine, visited Pyongyang in September 1997. She reported that the director of the Pyongyang City Orphanage, told her that, "sometimes it is difficult for us to provide the children with food."<sup>105</sup> United States Representative Tony P. Hall visited North Korea for three days in August 1996. In congressional testimony before the Senate Subcommittee on East Asian and Pacific Affairs on 12 September 1996 he reported that during his visit "he saw a lot of individual soldiers throughout the capital and countryside. They have the same hollow-checked look as civilians, and their uniforms hang very loosely on them."<sup>106</sup>

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eds. Jae H. Ku and Tae Hwan Ok (Washington: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1996), 1-15.

<sup>104</sup> Noland., 109.

<sup>105</sup> Carroll Bogert, "Secrets and Lies," *Newsweek*, 22 Sep. 1997, 42.

<sup>106</sup> U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, Subcommittee on East Asian and Pacific Affairs, North Korea: An Overview, hearing, 104<sup>th</sup> congress., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., 12 Sep. 1996 (Washington: GPO, 1996), 2-5.



These first hand accounts by independent observers tend to refute Noland's argument that food shortages are localized and contained to the countryside. These accounts clearly indicate that food shortages are becoming more pervasive and are spreading from the countryside to the cities.

Noland also contends that the PRC, Japan or South Korea has the capability to keep North Korea afloat during the current crisis. He says, "Both Japan and China **appear** to have surplus government grain stocks that **could** (emphasis added) make up the North Korean shortfall at minimal expense."<sup>107</sup> While this statement is probably true, it ignores the fact that to date Japan and China have not been willing to give North Korea this amount of support. There is nothing to indicate that they will anytime in the near future. Also, Noland offers no long-term solution to the food crisis. In order to survive, North Korea must solve its long-term problems.

### C. CONCLUSION

The argument that North Korea will emerge intact from its current crisis is not very strong and is well supported



by facts. Those who argue that North Korea will collapse due to the current crisis make a much stronger argument. North Korea is likely to collapse due to its political isolation, a failing economy, ongoing food shortages and an ever-increasing number of high level defectors. In the next chapter I will look at three possible collapse scenarios.

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<sup>107</sup> Noland., 110.



## **VI. COLLAPSE SCENARIOS**

### **A. INTRODUCTION**

If North Korea does collapse it is likely to happen under one of the following three scenarios. North Korea will explode (hard landing), unify with South Korea through mutual negotiations (soft landing), or implode. In this chapter I will look at each of these scenarios from both the North and South Korean perspectives. Each scenario ultimately leads to the unification of the Korean Peninsula. However, if North Korea is to have a say in how the peninsula is unified it must pursue the soft landing. Under the other scenarios South Korea will dictate the terms of unification.

### **B. EXPLOSION SCENARIO**

The rationale behind the explosion scenario is that if the current economic trends continue, North Korea's leadership eventually will realize they are on the verge of collapse. With no options remaining, the leadership would launch a surprise attack against South Korea. The goal of the attack may not be total victory against the South.

Instead, North Korea would hope to seize a large portion of South Korea and then sue for peace on its own terms, which would include a mass infusion of economic aid. Hwang Jong-yop, upon defecting to South Korea said that the North, "seems to believe its only choice is to use military forces it has been preparing for decades."<sup>108</sup>

At first glance, the decision to invade the South may appear to be highly unlikely and irrational. However, this move by North Korea would be no more irrational than Saddam Hussein's decision to invade and subsequently withdraw from Kuwait. In 1997, six years after he lost the Gulf War, Saddam remains in power. North Korean leadership has demonstrated time and again that they are not necessarily prone to Western definitions of rational behavior. From North Korea's perspective, this scenario may be its only option and could result in several benefits.

### **1. North Korea: Pros and Cons of Explosion**

North Korea could expect to gain several benefits from launching an attack on South Korea. What could North Korea expect to gain from an attack on South Korea?

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<sup>108</sup> Quoted in, Bernard E. Trainor, "A Second Korean War?," *Marine Corps Gazette* (Aug. 1997): 26-7.

1. The main benefit North Korea could hope to attain by attacking South Korea is the potential to sue for peace on their terms. This could include dictating the terms for unification in exchange for ending hostilities. It could also include mass infusions of foreign aid in order to ease the current economic crisis.

2. North Korea could also attack the South in the mistaken belief that it could actually win the war. With most of its million man army already deployed on the DMZ, North Korea could launch a surprise attack on the South and make a rapid advance. North Korea would hope to win the war before South Korean and American forces could assemble the reserve forces needed to counter attack.

3. North Korea could hope to use the war as a domestic rallying point for its starving population.

This would not be the first time a beleaguered leader has used this tactic.<sup>109</sup>

4. North Korea could start a war in hopes that the PRC or Russia would come to their aid and enter on their

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<sup>109</sup> For example, Argentina's invasion of the Falkland Islands and Iraq's invasions of Iran and Kuwait.

side. If the PRC or Russia did enter the war, North Korea would expect large amounts of military and economic assistance.

5. North Korea could also enter the war with the expectation that the U.S. would not enter the war. Despite the U.S. commitment to defend South Korea, the U.S. Congress or the American people may not support sending troops to fight in Korea.

6. By attacking the South, North Korea could also hope to drive a wedge into the U.S.-Japan relationship. This would occur if Japan declined to support U.S. forces in a Korean war or if Japan did not allow the U.S. to use its bases in Japan to support a war on the peninsula.

7. Finally, the Masada complex could motivate North Korean leadership. North Korean leaders could determine that if they are going down, they might as well take South Korea with them.<sup>110</sup>

I have listed some of the pros of the explosion scenario from the North Korean perspective. There would also be some serious risks from an attack on South Korea.



What are the possible cons of the explosion scenario from a North Korean perspective?

1. An attack on the South would almost certainly result in a response from the combined forces of South Korea and the U.S. Although North Korea could make considerable initial advances in a surprise attack, there is little hope that North Korea could win a war of attrition against the U.S. and South Korea. The resulting war almost certainly would result in the complete destruction of North Korea and its leadership. South Korea would then dictate the terms of unification.

2. If North Korea attacked the South it may result in further international isolation. Although the PRC may enter the war on the side of North Korea it may also do nothing. The PRC may not be willing to risk losing its trade with South Korea by entering the war on the side of North Korea. It is also doubtful that Russia would enter the war on the side on North Korea. As discussed earlier, Russia no longer has a military treaty with North Korea. As a result of an attack,

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<sup>110</sup> Edward A. Olsen, "Coping with the Korean Peace Process: An American View," *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis* Vol. IX, No. 1 (Summer

North Korea could find itself isolated from its last ally, the PRC.

## **2. South Korea: Pros and Cons of Explosion**

South Korea has little to gain if North Korea launches a surprise attack. The only thing South Korea would gain is a virtually certain victory if North Korea attacks. As a result, South Korea would be able to dictate the terms of unification.

South Korea has a lot to lose if North Korea launches a desperation attack. The cons of the explosion scenario from the South Korean perspective are listed below.

1. If North Korea attacked, South Korea would obviously suffer an enormous loss of life. Much of South Korea's infrastructure and factories might also be destroyed, especially in the Seoul area. The costs to rebuild following the end of the war would be astronomical and could jeopardize the South Korean economy.

2. Financing the war itself would also be a huge drain on the South Korean economy. Estimates of the cost of fighting a war in Korea vary. Some estimates

are as high as 1 trillion dollars. This figure does not include the costs of rebuilding both North and South Korea following the end of the war. Although South Korea would be able to dictate the terms of unification following the war, this is the least appealing scenario from the South Korean perspective.<sup>111</sup>

### **C. SOFT LANDING SCENARIO**

Under the soft landing scenario a unified Korean Peninsula would emerge from bilateral or multilateral negotiations involving both North and South Korea. Under this scenario, both Koreas would agree to and implement the terms of unification. Under this scenario billions of dollars in aid would flow from the U.S., Japan, and South Korea to North Korea in exchange for opening up and implementing both economic and political reforms. Unification would be gradual and would slowly occur over a number of years. What are the pros and cons of negotiated unification for both North and South Korea?

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<sup>111</sup> Ki-hwan Kim, "North Korea at the Critical Crossroads," *Korea Focus* Vol. 5, No. 3 (May-Jun 1997): 3.

## **1. North Korea: Pros and Cons of Soft Landing**

North Korea has a lot to gain from the soft landing scenario. What are some of the pros of a soft landing for North Korea?

1. Under the soft landing scenario, North Korea will play a large role in determining their fate. Under this scenario, North Korean leadership could negotiate a power sharing agreement with South Korea, which would allow them to largely control events in the north.

2. Negotiated unification would allow North Korea to slash their military spending. The savings could be diverted into sorely needed economic development.

3. Foreign investors would probably be much more willing to invest in North Korea if the threat of war were diminished. Foreign investment is desperately needed to modernize the industrial base and infrastructure.

4. Negotiated unification would bring an end to North Korea's political isolation.

Despite all the pros of a soft landing, North Korea can also expect some costs from a soft landing. What are the cons from North Korea's perspective?

1. In order to have a soft landing, North Korea would have to undertake major economic and political reforms. In order to make these reforms, North Korea would have to admit that Juche ideology was a failure. This admission has the potential of undermining the credibility of the current leadership in North Korea.

2. As the North Korean society opens up and the standard of living increases, the population may become restless and seek the democratic freedoms enjoyed by their cousins to the south. The process of opening up ultimately could bring down the leadership of North Korea.

## **2. South Korea: Pros and Cons of Soft Landing**

For many of the same reasons as North Korea, South Korea has much to gain through the soft landing scenario. What are the pros from the South Korean perspective?

1. Like North Korea, South Korea could also slash its military spending and reinvest the dividends into their economy.

2. The costs of unification are estimated at anywhere from 250 billion to 2 trillion dollars.<sup>112</sup> A soft landing and gradual unification would allow South Korea to spread these costs over a long period of time.

3. South Korea no longer would be under the constant threat of war it has been under ever since the end of the Korean War.

4. South Korean business could benefit from cheap labor costs in the north. This could prove to be a boon to the South Korean economy.

Although limited, there are some cons to the soft landing scenario from the South Korean perspective. What are the cons for South Korea?

1. Under the other scenarios for unification, South Korea would largely dictate the terms of unification. Under this scenario South Korea will have to give in to some of the desires of North Korea.

2. Although other countries would presumably help to defray the costs of unification, South Korea would bear the brunt of the costs. The costs of unification may be a huge drag on the South Korean economy.

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<sup>112</sup> Olsen, 175.



3. Unification may slow down the democracy process in South Korea. The state may become more authoritarian as it brings in the north.

#### **D. IMPLOSION SCENARIO**

Implosion or the sudden collapse of both the economic and political systems of North Korea could occur in several ways for many different reasons. Implosion could be either partial or complete. If North Korea were to partially implode, another regime would replace the current regime. However under a partial implosion the country would remain intact under new leadership. Implosion could also be complete. Under a complete implosion, North Korea would cease to exist as a sovereign nation. Implosion could come about as a result of a military or political coup d'etat. Implosion could also come from below if mass riots were started in response to continuing or worsening economic conditions. Implosion could also occur if Kim Jong Il were to suddenly abdicate in order to avert a coup.

## **1. North Korea: Pros and Cons of Implosion**

It is hard to imagine that the current leadership would benefit from either a partial or complete implosion. The North Korean people could possibly benefit from either a partial or complete implosion depending on what new regime comes into power. A more moderate regime could replace the current regime. On the other hand the current regime could be replaced by an even more ideological authoritarian regime (relative to the current regime). If a more authoritarian regime replaces the current one, one can assume that either the explosion scenario will follow or the implosion scenario will repeat itself. For discussion purposes, I will assume that a partial implosion will result in a more moderate government willing to reform and negotiate with South Korea.

I will look at the pros of an implosion scenario from the view of the North Korean people and not the current regime. What could the North Korean people expect to gain from a partial implosion?

1. A new regime could cast aside Juche ideology without jeopardizing its legitimacy. In fact, the failure of Juche ideology could be one of the main reasons a new regime comes into power. If it casts

aside Juche ideology, the new regime could undertake massive economic reforms. These reforms would include Chinese style agrarian reforms and opening to western investment. The U.S. and South Korea, along with other countries, would probably be willing to give large scale economic assistance in return for a reduction of military forces by the new regime. This could in turn save North Korea from its current predicament. In this case, North Korea could survive as a nation under a new regime.

From the North Korean perspective, a complete implosion would be devastating. It would mean the end of the current economic and political system as North Korea is absorbed by the south.

## **2. South Korea: Pros and Cons of Implosion**

South Korea could benefit from the implosion scenario. What are the pros of the implosion from the South Korean perspective?

1. A partial implosion in North Korea with a moderate regime replacing the current one would result in the same benefits as the soft landing scenario.

2. A complete implosion would also benefit South Korea.

South Korea would no longer be under the threat of war.

3. A complete implosion would allow South Korea to dictate the terms of unification.

A complete implosion could also have some negative effects on South Korea. What are the cons to a complete implosion scenario from the South Korean perspective?

1. The major drawback to a complete implosion would be the huge economic costs. Unlike the partial implosion or soft landing scenarios South Korea would be forced to quickly absorb North Korea. A complete implosion has the potential to completely destroy or severely undermine the South Korean economy.

2. South Korea would also face the prospect of a flood of refugees migrating from the north in search of food and jobs. This huge flood of people could overwhelm South Korea.

#### **E. RANKING THE SCENARIOS**

Of the three scenarios, the explosion scenario is the least likely to occur. Although North Korea would hope for outside assistance from the PRC or Russia if it invades South Korea it is unlikely to get it. Russia has already

abrogated the Friendship Treaty military clause and made clear to North Korea that it will not come to its aid in a military crisis. In the dispute over the Hwang defection the PRC sided with South Korea. It is doubtful that the PRC would enter the war in support of North Korea. Although though North Korean leaders would hope for outside assistance, they must realize that the chance of such assistance is remote.

Due to its current economic conditions, North Korea would not be able to sustain a major offensive for long. In order for the explosion scenario to be successful, North Korea must be able grab a large piece of South Korea and then be able to hold on to it until they can sue for peace on their terms. With the current fuel, food, and hard currency shortages it is unlikely they would be able to hold out long enough for this scenario to work. Therefore, although possible, this scenario is highly unlikely.

The soft landing scenario seems to make the most sense from both the North and South Korean perspectives. Under this scenario, North Korean leadership could possibly stay in power. They would be able to get much needed assistance and investment from the west. However, through opening up they risk losing control over their people. The soft



landing scenario would enable the leadership to undertake PRC style economic reforms. With successful economic reforms the current leadership could remain in power indefinitely.

This scenario is also unlikely. Kim Jong Il has already had the opportunity to negotiate but has refused. He has brought his country to the edge of collapse and shows no signs of stepping back. The Basic Agreement and the four way talks are both excellent opportunities to move in this direction yet he refuses.

The current economic situation, political isolation, food shortages and defections are all indicators that North Korea is already in the early stages of collapse. Without immediate outside assistance and fundamental economic reforms North Korea will eventually implode. The worst case scenario from both a North and South Korean perspective is a complete implosion. The best case scenario is a partial implosion with a more moderate government coming into power.



## VII. CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The United States has pursued three broad policy objectives in Asia since the end of World War II. They are 1) freedom of the seas; 2) unimpeded access to the markets of the region; and 3) preventing the domination of the region by a single power or group of powers.<sup>113</sup> The impending unification of the Korean Peninsula under the leadership of Seoul will not change these broad policy objectives.

A central element of contemporary United States policy has been the commitment to indefinitely maintain 100,000 forward-deployed troops in Asia.<sup>114</sup> South Korea is host to 37,000 of these forward-deployed troops. Once Korea is unified the 100,000 troop policy will need to be reevaluated. The United States will need to maintain a large number of troops in Korea immediately following unification. However, once the peninsula is stabilized under Seoul's leadership, it will be tough to justify maintaining the current level of American forces in Korea.

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<sup>113</sup> Holmes and Moore, 52.

<sup>114</sup> Cohen, 31.

The primary purpose of stationing 37,000 troops in South Korea is to discourage North Korea from attacking South. Once Korea is unified the mission will be successfully completed.

The bulk of American troops in South Korea are United States Army personnel. United States Army presence in Korea should probably decrease after Korea is unified and conditions on the peninsula are stable.

Asian leaders have come to rely on the United States policy of maintaining 100,000 forward-deployed troops in Asia. The policy has increased stability in the region and helped prevent a potential arms race. If the United States repatriates forward-deployed troops in Korea after Korean unification, a potential power vacuum could be created by their withdrawal.

In order to avert creating a possible power vacuum and unleashing a potential arms race after withdrawing a large portion of its forward-deployed forces, the United States should consider increasing its naval presence in Asia following Korean unification.

If the United States does increase American naval presence, it should consider home porting an aircraft carrier and her escort ships in a unified Korea. To date,

Japan refuses to allow the United States to station nuclear aircraft carriers at its bases in Japan. Although the United States is able to manage this Japanese policy today by deploying non-nuclear carriers to Japan, it will become more difficult as the United States retires non-nuclear carriers and replaces them with nuclear carriers. Permanently stationing a nuclear carrier in Korea after unification is one way to resolve this problem. This policy recommendation is of course contingent upon Korea's willingness to host a carrier and the United States desire to maintain a permanently forward-deployed carrier battle group in Asia following Korean unification.

Home porting a carrier in Korea would not only allow the United States to maintain naval dominance in the region but may also reduce tensions within Japan. There is already domestic political pressure within Japan to kick out forward-deployed American forces. If the United States withdraws the majority of its ground forces from Korea, Japan would be the only host nation in Asia with a large number of American forward-deployed forces. This would only add to the political pressure in Japan to oust American forces. By pursuing this recommended policy the United States could preempt these political pressures and

have an alternate site to home port a carrier if Japan does ask the United States to leave.<sup>115</sup>

If this policy is carried out, the United States Army will likely lose one of its Four Star General billets. As such, United States Army resistance to this suggested policy should be expected. The Army is likely to lose the Four Star billet regardless of whether or not the United States increases its naval presence if United States force levels in Korea decline after unification.

A large and continuing naval presence will be required in order for the United States to meet its policy objectives in Asia following Korean unification. The United States will undoubtedly reduce the number of forward-deployed Army forces in Korea following unification. If the United States does repatriate a large number of Army personnel following unification, an increased naval presence will help maintain stability in the region. An increased naval presence will also contribute to the United States ability to achieve its longstanding broad policy objectives in Asia.

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<sup>115</sup> Christopher Yung, Chang Su Kim, Sung Hwan Wie and Jae-Wook Lee, Naval Cooperation After Korean Unification, (Washington: Center for Naval Analysis, 1996) 10-11.

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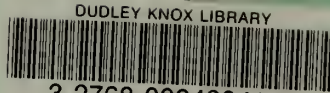
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